

# ABOUT ANIMAL PROTECTION IN EDUCATION

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## INTRODUCTION

In the past decades animal protection and responsible animal keeping has become an emphasized issue not only among the experts but also both among theorists and those interested in dealing with practical matters. Society had become more interested in detailed issues concerning animal protection such as competent keeping and attending of pets<sup>1</sup> as well as the education on their humane treatment.

## LEGAL PRINCIPALS OF EDUCATION ON ANIMAL PROTECTION

Act XXVIII of 1998 on the protection and humane treatment of animals states that education on proper attitude and caring of animals must be built in the trainings and educational lectures at schools. It is the responsibility of the state and local authorities as well as the educational institutes to execute these tasks.<sup>2</sup> The Act also records that the state being responsible for the education on proper behaviour towards animals contributes to the shaping of view concerning animals' welfare by providing information, courses and education. In practice however, the concerned authorities not at all or not efficiently attend these tasks.<sup>3</sup> According to the Act the animal protection authority takes an active part in the extracurricular education of provisions concerning animal protection. In point of this provision the two authorities to proceed as animal protecting authorities are the National Food Chain Safety Office and the Food Chain Safety and Animal Health Directorate.<sup>4</sup>

It is a regrettable fact that despite the provisions neither the basic program of the pre-school education nor the National Curriculum touches duly the subject of responsible animal keeping. Although children's education starts in the family and it would be the parents' responsibility to introduce humane treatment of animals sadly they do not emphasize it well enough. This could obviously be the explanation for the more and more recently revealed early childhood or youth animal abuse. Presumably these children have not received enough education on animals throughout their early-year and school studies. In default of that children will lack the knowledge of proper keeping and humane treatment of animals.

The basic program of preschool education defines the principles of the educational work in preschools.<sup>5</sup> The main purpose of education in preschools is to ensure children's versatile and balanced development including emotional, moral education

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<sup>1</sup> TÖZSÉR János, FODOR Kinga: *Állatvédelem oktatása Magyarországon: tények és perspektívák*. Animal welfare – etológia és tartástechnológia 2011. évi (7. évf.) 4. szám 443.

<sup>2</sup> ZOLTÁN Ödön: *Az állatvédelem jogi rendje*. KJK Kerszöv Kiadó, Budapest 2000. 163.

<sup>3</sup> PAULOVICS Anita: *Állatvédelem az EU jogharmonizáció tükrében*. Virtuóz Kiadó, Budapest, 2002. 91.

<sup>4</sup> 334/2006. (XII. 23.) Kormányrendelet az állatvédelmi hatóság kijelöléséről 2. § (8)

<sup>5</sup> 363/2012. (XII. 17.) Kormányrendelet az Óvodai nevelés országos alapprogramjáról 1. számú melléklet 1.

as well as environmental friendly attitude. However, the basic program does not mention any education concerning animal protection therefore this task depends on the teaching staff of the given institute. Government Regulation allows the educational institutes to further expend the Curriculum so that they have the possibility for the education on responsible animal keeping as well. Nevertheless, it is not the reality in practice so rightfully the question arises “Why is there no education on animal protection?” although it has no legal impediment.

In recent years – thanks to partly teachers and partly civil organizations – it has become more and more general that the members of civil organizations give lectures and talks on the subject of responsible animal keeping. Although it is definitely a big step ahead compared to previous practices, it is still not enough in my opinion. There should be systematic education on responsible animal keeping in fact there could be a separate subject taught at schools. Animals are still considered objects by both our law system and society. But – as it is stated in the Act – animals can feel, suffer, and have certain emotions, so they deserve protection. In order for this view to advance we need a change of attitude, which, as for me, should start on a level as early as childhood. In this respect I have two proposals to consider. The first is that responsible animal keeping should be part of the Curriculum as a topic. Therefore, I believe it should be supported that civil organizations take part in the education as these organizations represent animal protection issues and their aspiration about the protection of animals has become more powerfully voiced. They come across several runaway and tortured animals on an everyday basis. Furthermore, some of these civil organizations already have developed educational programme. In my opinion there is much to learn from the sad experiences of the everyday life as well.

My other proposal is that as long as the Curriculum does not include animal protection as a topic the educational institutes shall see to it in their own authority. It could also be a good solution if educational institutes enter into an agreement with civil organizations which are involved in education concerning animal protection. The legal background is also given in this case as the Act specifies education on animal protection as an obligation and for the educational institutes to promote it. Nevertheless, in this regard of obligation there are no specific, detailed regulations in the Act therefore entering into an agreement has no illegal ground.

For all these reasons the above mentioned organizations should do all possible to direct the interest of society towards issues concerning animal protection.<sup>6</sup>

## ANIMAL PROTECTION IN EDUCATION

As far as I am concerned, this matter could be more emphasized in the legal department of education as well, as thanks to the different organizations cases appearing before the different authorities in connection with animal protection are increasing. Following my theme leader and proponent’s understanding of the importance of the matter the Department of Law at the University of Miskolc commenced an optional subject called *Animal Law Clinic*. The thought of having a subject like this did not only come because of the legal problems arising in animal

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<sup>6</sup> Uo.165.

protection, but was also based on the study called “Issues of Clinical and Legal Education” by Zsolt Nagy. The main point of the study is the following: The clinical program is a sort of legal practice in which a law student under the supervision of an expert or experts in the given field practices actual legal work.<sup>7</sup> The candidates need to solve a concrete legal problem with the help of a supervisor. There have been two types of legal clinics developed. Low income citizens could get legal help free of charge by an extra-curricular program. Law students can also work for the organizations running the program and receive credit points as well. In other words this is where the university training program links with the legal help service outside the university. In the case of the university training program there are further differences. There is the so called system without a client and the method with an existing client. In the program without a client university students explain legal cases and problems to untrained listeners (such as school students).<sup>8</sup> This practice could as well be applied in home public education, in the way that within the clinical program university students would go to secondary schools where they could give talks and lectures on legal problems concerning animal protection.

The main features of the existing client program:

1. The law students deal with actual cases, mainly with people who for having a low income could not turn to an attorney.
2. The students discuss cases with their teachers in practice lessons.
3. Mostly law students with the necessary theoretical knowledge can take part as there is a basic knowledge requirement in order for the students to be able to deal with the cases.
4. The law students can learn through their own experiences about how the law works.<sup>9</sup>

The purpose of Animal law clinic is to apply the knowledge obtained during the legal studies. The students get acquainted with animal and other applicable laws such as law of procedures, local government regulations and so on. Besides they are also involved in solving legal animal protection cases, co-operating with the authorities, editing documents, and if necessary they appear in court procedures.<sup>10</sup> There have been many requests for help coming from animal lovers, and most cases or questions have been answered by the participants of the program in accordance with their time availability.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

In my opinion, there should be way more emphasis on the education concerning animal protection already in pre-schools, in the form of games and different playful activities.<sup>11</sup> Then later this should continue similarly in elementary and secondary schools. I also find it possible that even in higher education this issue should be

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<sup>7</sup> NAGY Zsolt: *A klinikai jogi oktatás kérdéseiről*. Jogelméleti Szemle 2001. évi (3. évf.) 6. szám

<sup>8</sup> <http://jesz.ajk.elte.hu/nagyzs7.html> (2015. január 19.)

<sup>9</sup> Uo.

<sup>10</sup> [http://jogikar.uni-miskolc.hu/allatjogi-klinika\\_1](http://jogikar.uni-miskolc.hu/allatjogi-klinika_1) (2015. január 19.)

<sup>11</sup> PAULOVICS: i.m. 91.

more emphasized as there are many fields affected by animal protection. Furthermore, education concerning positive attitude towards animal protection is obligatory by law for all educational institutes.

I find it rather important to widespread legal and non-legal problems concerning animal protection as this is the only way to contribute to further positive changes in this scope.

## REFERENCES

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